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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the research undertaken by trainees in counseling supervision who were students in a class on studies in supervision. One study which is discussed focuses on the relationship of supervisor behavior and supervisor didactic or experiential expectations. Another study is presented which explores the behavioral correlates of supervisors' didactic or experiential expectations over time. Also discussed are an investigation of the interpersonal influence dimensions of expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness on the supervisory relationship and an examination of the effective supervisor as perceived by beginning counselor trainees. Doctoral research of the author in presented which concerns supervisor-counselor interpersonal need compatibility and counseling supervision. Findings from the studies are summarized and implications for the training of supervisors are discussed. (Author/NRB)

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# Impact of the Supervision Course: A Researcher's Perspective[1]

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Impact of the Supervision Course: A Researcher's Perspective

The major emphasis of the Studies in Supervision course is on training competent counseling supervisors. In an attempt to build on empirical foundations for effective supervision, students and instructor examined supervision research and the importance and implications of research findings to supervisors. However, our examination of the literature led us to the conclusion that, although individual counseling supervision was regarded as a most crucial phase of counselor training, research in this area had been very limited. We also saw that, in this course, with access to counselor-trainees being supervised, here was a ready-made laboratory for expanding our understanding of the process of supervision. Therefore, a number of students decided to explore in a more systematic way, some of the questions generated from their readings and experiences as neophyte supervisors.

I would like to now briefly touch on findings from some of the supervision research completed by students of the class, including my own investigation.

Much of the early supervision research had examined the issue of didactic versus experiential expectations of supervisors. Jim Smith (1975) was one of the first to try to relate didactic and experiential supervisor expectations to actual behaviors. Smith's findings indicated that although supervisors may have different expectations, or method preferences, thier actual behaviors did not differ. He also found that the more experienced a supervisor was, the more didactic were his/her expectations. Russ Newton (1976) followed up Smith's work by exploring the behavioral correlates of supervisors' didactic or experiential expectations over time.

He confirmed Smith's findings: supervisors labelled didactic or experiential are more alike than different in their sub-role behavior. He also found that sub-role behavior does change over time: in the beginning of supervision with a student, there is more structuring and information-giving, and in later sessions, there is more relationship-building.

Tom Miller(1979) examined the interpersonal influence dimensions of expertness, attractiveness, and trustworthiness in the supervisory relationship. He found that trainees' perceptions of these dimensions were all related to their perceptions of the quality of supervision; further, these perceptions of expertness, attractiveness, and worthwhileness were initially high in the relationship and did not diminish over time. It seems then that new supervirsors have high level of potential influence even at the first supervision session. Similar to Newton's finding was the fact that those supervisors rated as having higher levels of influence pay more attention to structure and goal-setting in early stages of supervision, and then focus on relationship or experiential aspects in later stages. In a recently published article by another former student, Everett Worthington(1979), this latter finding was coroborated: supervisors seem to perceive good supervision as mainly consisting of feedback about trainees' counseling ability, whereas trainees rated supervision as better when their supervisors more directly taught them how to counsel within a supportive relationship. Thus, according to Worthington, what supervisor believe to be important to good supervision is not necessarily the same as what trainees believe to be important.

The impetus for my doctoral research(Stern, 1978) came from a number of sources which seemed to me point to the need to examine more closely the dynamic interplay between supervisor and counselor-trainee. That

such an interaction did indeed exist had been vividly described by Mueller and Kell (1972) who wrote about the importance of the supervisory relationship, and the negative consequences for supervision of the supervisor whose own needs interfered with those of the trainee. Second, although relationship factors had been studied in counselor-client pairing research, relatively little attention has been given to how supervisors and trainees are paired or matched. Thus I was interested in determining if pairing on the basis of interpersonal need compatibility (as measured by the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (FIRO-B) scale) might enhance the quality and outcome of supervision. In my study, I investigated the relationship of supervisor-trainee compatibility to supervisor rating of trainee counseling competence and to supervisor and trainee satisfaction with their relationship. Fifty-one supervisor-trainee pairs were administered the FIRO-B scale (which measures compatibility) at the beginning of their involvement. Three months later at the end of supervision they were administered the outcome measures.

Via a series of stepwise multiple regression analyses, I found that compatibility was not significantly related to trainee counseling competence or to supervisor satisfaction with the relationship. However, I did find that three compatibility variables, operating jointly, were significantly related to trainee satisfaction. (These variables were, in order of the magnitude of their effect, interchange affection <u>incompatibility</u>, reciprocal affection compatibility, and reciprocal control compatibility.) That is, counselor-trainees were more likely to be satisfied with the relationship when they and their supervisors had dissimilar or <u>incompatible</u> affection need preferences, and when their <u>expressed</u> affection and control needs matched the others' <u>wanted</u> affection and control needs.

Accordingly, one may conjecture about the interactions between supervisors and trainees. In those relationships that are satisfying to trainees, each person in the dyad may have different degrees of affection needs; despite this difference, each recognizes and attempts to respond to the other's affection and control need preferences. Being attuned to each other's differences and responding to them seems an important element in the supervisory interaction. Alternatively stated, "empathic dissimilarity" may enhance trainee satisfaction with supervision. This empathic responding to differences between supervisor and trainee may indeed be akin to the concept of "working through" in the therapist-client relationship.

In a further analysis of the data, I found that supervisor-trainee pairs tended to be highly compatible. Thus compatibility may have failed to affect other outcome measures such as counselor competence because compatibility was already operating in the supervisory relationship. Perhaps another consequence of highly compatible pairs was the finding that trainees and their supervisors tended to rate supervision in a somewhat restrained manner; for example, perceptions of supervision were not negative, but neither wree they highly positive; trainees rated their supervisors as having slight impact on their counseling effectiveness rather than very much impact. If further research substantiates this relationship between compatibility and only luke-warm feelings about supervision, then optimal supervisor-trainee matching may be accomplished by pairing moderately incompatible individuals.

I'd like to comment on one further finding. In a factor analysis of the variables studied, two relationship factors emerged. One was Trainee Relationship Satisfaction. For trainees, satisfaction with supervision

was associated with process dimensions of the relationship or the working through of interpersonal need differences. The second factor was Trainee Competence-Supervisor Relationship Satisfaction. For supervisors, their satisfaction with supervision was associated with trainee counseling competence. Compared to trainee, supervisor satisfaction seemed more reliant on outcome dimensions of the relationship. I'd like to conclude by briefly summarizing some of the implications from the research for the training of supervisors:

1st Although supervisors may say they prefer different methods as Fiedler found with experienced psychotherapists, supervisor's actual behaviors may be more similar than different.

2nd In supervision neophyte counselors, experienced supervisors tend to be more didactic or structured. Counselor-trainees seem to prefer their supervisors to be more teaching-oriented in the beginning of supervision; later on, they prefer their supervisors to be more relationship-oriented. What more experienced trainees prefer is, at this point, less certain.

3rd Even inexperienced supervisors are in a significant position to influence their trainees from the first session on. Again, we are less certain about the influencibility of post-Masters trainees.

4th A high degree of interpersonal need compatibility may have an adverse effect on the supervisory process.

5th Since psychological supervision can be viewed as a significant interpersonal process, which may be similar to and even overlap with the counseling process, future researchers in the area of

supervision are justified in borrowing readily from the dimensions used in social psychological and psychotherapeutic research.

The research activities generated by the ideas and interests which grew from the supervision class are only a few examples, though important ones, of the contributions being made to the growing counseling supervision literature.

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